M O N O G R A P H

THE CHAPLAIN AS A PRISONER OF WAR

Prepared in

Chaplain Officer Advanced Course, 16-A-C4, Class 58-5

US Army Chaplain School
Fort Slocum New York

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THE CHAPLAIN AS A PRISONER OF WAR

SCOPE: This deals with the Army chaplain who may become a prisoner of war in any future engagement of this country.

OBJECTIVES: To prepare the chaplain as fully as possible to carry on his ministry to the American service men under adverse circumstances anticipated in a prisoner of war condition.

I. PREPARATION

Just as the soldier must train before battle in order to be successful in combat, so must the chaplain prepare himself if he is to influence men in his prison parish. It is as unwise for a soldier to say "there is no use for me to learn to fire my rifle since there are so very few who ever get to the front." So the chaplain cannot afford to neglect his preparation and since in every engagement of war in the history of our country there have been chaplains captured, it is anticipated that this will happen in the future of any military operations.

A. Physical

The military forces of our country have always emphasized the necessity of physical preparedness. According to reports from World War II and the Korean War, the men who could undergo the long marches forced on them by the enemy, were the ones who survived and in most cases lived to return home. Physical strength will be of great advantage to the chaplain for a personal reason, but still greater, will enable him to minister in adverse circumstances.

B. Spiritual

The past records of our prisoners have indicated that no Bibles

have been available, especially at first. Therefore, it is presumed there will not be any kind of religious aids in the prison camps of the future. It becomes the responsibility of the military chaplain to know the word of God. Let us remember the words of David who said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I may not sin against Thee." There is no other weapon that will assist the chaplain to accomplish his mission while in prison like a knowledge of the word of God. Jesus was able to refute the enemy by stating, "It is written", and the chaplain who has an understanding of the Bible will be prepared to render the most efficient service.

C. Mentally

The chaplain can do a great deal of profitable counseling if he understands the psychological reactions of men under the strain of prison life, and expecially when they have to be subjected to long periods of interrogation and brainwashing as did our men in the Korean Prison Camps. It is expected that a chaplain will have greater opportunity to render service in the field of counseling in the future prison camp than any other time of his military career. The chaplain should become acquainted with the Code of Conduct in order to know his responsibilities to his country and also to aid other prisoners. Every chaplain should know the evil influence of communism and be able to refute its principles and assist his fellow prisoners in doing the same.

II. MINISTERING

The fact that religious ministry under any conceivable captor will be extremely difficult, it is in no way relief from responsibility as a man of God or military chaplain to render service. Granted that it will

be impossible to render the same type of religious services as one would in the ordinary camp, post or station.

A. Types

A story is told about a group of men in a Korean Prison Camp, who put a golden cross in their ear to identify them and to remind others that they were Christians. A chaplain could have a pass word such as, "The Lord is my Shepherd". This as well as other quotes could do a great deal in reminding men of God. There could be a cross marked on the ground during the night and when men saw this they would be reminded of God. In the book Chaplain Kapaun, an interesting story is told of the cross on his helmet liner; someone asked him why he didn't wear the helmet and he remarked that it would antagonize the Communists but if he put it on the rubbish, each man who went there to discard trash would be reminded of Christ. After his death it is told that many men saw the cross and prayed to God. Then a missionary nurse, who was captured in China and remained in prison for fifty-two months, tells how she walked down the corridor, how she would whistle old hymns in hopes that other Christians might hear and take renewed courage. The chaplain can further his ministry be keeping a bright and cheerful outlook for the future, and use this as a means to help other prisoners. Men need to be encouraged to look forward to the time when they will be reunited with their families. They need to be reminded of how their people are praying for their safe return and that the church is praying, the community is expecting them to keep faith, and that the confidence and integrity of our nation depends on whether the individual American soldier can succeed in standing up for his faith and principles on

which our country was founded, under enemy pressure.

If some of these methods appear to be small, it must be remembered that in contrast to nothing this may well be the acorn that produces the oak, or the ounce that throws the scale toward the direction of God and freedom. Even if these efforts do not wield a great influence, inability to move a mountain does not constitute an excuse for doing nothing. The Christian chaplain cannot allow himself to forget that ministry under adverse conditions is the channel through which he has received the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that the early followers of Christ were imprisoned and under those conditions they rendered some of their greatest services. The prisoner chaplain should take advantage of his circumstances to promote the Gospel even as the early Christians did.

B. Under More Favorable Conditions

The chaplain who will be a prisoner cannot anticipate the use of an organ or flowers on the altar, or an altar even if he had flowers. There will be no Bibles, hymnbooks or even any facility in which the chaplain can conduct services. Since there were no chaplains to return from Korea, it cannot be anticipated that future prisoners can have the good fortune that our prisoner chaplains had in World War II. In the Philippines, where many chaplains were prisoners, there were chapels and full scale religious programs. A story is told of a certain Good Friday in Germany, when the captors permitted a chaplain to go from one PW camp to another conducting services. In circumstances where you are without hymnbooks, Bible, organ or any other equipment, a chaplain must build a religious program and meet the needs of his men.

C. Small Groups

It is likely that the entire compound population will never be permitted the privilege of assembling for religious services, so small groups must be organized, mostly under Lay-leadership. The prison chaplains must assume the responsibility of selecting, inspiring and training men who will lead group religious activity during the imprisonment. Denominational preference and personal beliefs must be recognized and encouraged; also, cooperation between religious groups is essential to the reality of religious benefits to any group. Not all can participate in the same religious activity, but all can encourage each other in his own faith and pray in his own way for the strength of his fellowmen. Prayer has been the key to life for many prisoners in modern as well as ancient history. In World War II, Lt. Rittenhouse tells how through the aid of prayer, he was able to minister to men in his camp and also manage to go to other camps to preach to the enlisted men. He tells how he and others prayed one night for a plane not to drop its load of bombs on their camp and how God answered their prayer. To pray for deliverance is not wrong, for history is filled with stories of how men have been delivered by prayer, and it is not wrong to think of the American soldier in a prisoner of war camp to be being recognized as another link in the chain of history.

The chaplain certainly could be an instrument in assisting and ministering to the sick by securing extra food and medical care. He also could help organize the sports program in camps.

In doing all these things a chaplain must keep in mind his objectives are to help men keep faith with God and their country. It is by

remembering to trust in God that one under prison conditions can trust in his nation, and in turn be trusted by his country. Only through trust in God can one find that love and strength which will enable him, if necessary, to lay down his life for his fellow prisoners.

A chaplain can assist men in realizing that our forefathers paved the way to the advantages of our time by sacrifice; and if our lives be sacrificed in our mission they will have not been lost but invested in things that are worthy of all that we have and hold dear. If a man can feel that his suffering is rendering service to his family, his God, and his country, it will make all things more bearable.

D. Services

If it is possible to have full scale religious services, the chaplain would render the normal services as he does in the regular schedule of activities. This being a known fact I feel that it should not be dealt with here as this paper is more concerned with what might be done under adverse conditions.

III. ESCAPE

Since paragraph III in the Code of Conduct states that "If I am captured I will make every effort to escape and assist others in doing so." A chaplain will have to coordinate with the escape committee and cooperate with the senior prisoner, who is automatically the commander. A chaplain must recognize his place of greatest opportunity for service to the needs of the men, then make his recommendations to the commander as to whether he should escape or remain. I feel that where he can do the most good and serve the most men should weigh heavily in the consideration as to what he will finally do. However according to paragraph IV

of the Code you will obey your commander. If the commander becomes disloyal, the next loyal officer in rank becomes the commander.

IV. CONCLUSION

In discussing the personal qualities of a prisoner, religion cannot be over emphasized. There were many kinds of religions represented in the Prisoner of War Camps in Korea, and since religion has no place in the communist scheme, it too was a subject of attack. Religion will probably not be tolerated in a communist prison camp, therefore as chaplains we should prepare for that which seems to be so very evident in the life of a prisoner in such a situation.